

CABINET

6.00 P.M.

16TH JANUARY 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Phillip Black (Chair), Caroline Jackson, Joanne Ainscough, Gina Dowding, Tim Hamilton-Cox, Peter Jackson, Nick Wilkinson and Jason Wood

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors Jean Parr and Catherine Potter

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Davies	Chief Executive
Luke Gorst	Chief Officer - Governance and Monitoring Officer
Paul Thompson	Chief Officer - Resources and Section 151 Officer
Mark Cassidy	Chief Officer - Planning and Climate Change
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer

52 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

53 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE LEADER

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made at this point.

55 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Members were advised that there had been no requests to speak at the meeting in accordance with Cabinet's agreed procedure.

56 CORPORATE FEES AND CHARGES

Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Hamilton-Cox)

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Officer Resources which sought Cabinet's endorsement of the Fees and Charges Policy for 2024/25 and consideration of a range of charging options as deemed appropriate to the service area.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report as follows:

	Option 1: To support the inflationary increases/freezes as outlined in the report.	Option 2: To not support the inflationary increases as outlined in the report.
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Advantages	Fees and charges contribute further to the general fund net position. Costs of delivering Council services have increased as has demand in some areas. Not increasing costs means that further pressure is created on the Council's ability to deliver its core services.	Maintains the cost of services at 23/24 levels or at less than proposed in this report.
Disadvantages	The draft revenue budget has been prepared with the inclusion of the items raised in this report. Any further proposals would require further consideration prior to being fed into the budget process.	Costs of delivering Council services have increased as has demand in some areas. Not increasing costs means that further pressure is created on the Council's ability to deliver its core services.
Risks	Increasing fees to higher than suggested levels would most likely result in further resistance and potentially not achieve the targets originally set.	Cost of living increases and the return from the pandemic have reshaped people's habits. The income targets already set may not achieve projected levels in 23/24, resulting in a shortfall within the accounts

The officer preferred option is Option 1. Fees and Charges are reviewed on an annual basis and as outlined within the report, significant factors have become apparent as to why differing treatment is required within a couple of areas. It is felt that the recommendations made are of a fair nature and in-line with the attached policy.

Councillor Hamilton-Cox proposed, seconded by Councillor Wood:-

"That the recommendations, as set out in the report, be approved."

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet endorses the Fees and Charges Policy as set out at Appendix A to the report, and during 2024/25 as part of the mid-year budget strategy review determines whether any other areas of income generation be explored further for 2025/26 onwards.
- (2) That Cabinet endorses the increasing of selected car parking pay and display charges in line with those listed in Appendix C to the report.
- (3) That Cabinet endorses the increase of garden waste collection charges by £4 to £45 per annum.
- (4) That Cabinet endorses the application of inflationary increases to fees and

charges across all remaining areas as appropriate, as reported as part of the current 2024/25 budget setting process.

- (5) That Cabinet endorses the annual review of Mellishaw Park pitch fees in line with CPI, as prescribed by the Mobile Homes (Pitch Fees) Act 2023.
- (6) That Jubilee Court rents be set in accordance with the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, as applied to HRA housing stock.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Officer Resources

Reasons for making the decision:

Fees and charges form an integral part of the budget setting process, which in turn relates to the Council's priorities. Under the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), income generation is a specific initiative for helping to balance the budget. The proposed increases are considered to be fair and reasonable.

57 BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK UPDATE 2024/25 TO 2028/29 INCLUDING CAPITAL PROGRAMME, CAPITAL STRATEGY & TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Hamilton-Cox)

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Finance Officer to provide an update on the Council's budget strategy for 2024/25 and financial outlook up to 2028/29. Specifically, the report considered the budget and Council Tax proposals for 2024/25.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report as follows:

It is essential that the Council Tax rate is set in line with the Council Tax billing timetable. Any delay would put the Council at risk of not being able to collect the tax which would have serious cash flow implications.

Regarding the budget strategy, Cabinet may approve the proposals as set out, or ask for changes to be made to the suggested approach. The overriding aim of any budget setting process is to approve a balanced budget by statutory deadlines, allocating resources to help ensure delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and service outcomes. The proposed approach is in line with that broad aim and any changes that Cabinet puts forward should also be framed in that context.

In terms of the actual budget position, this report puts forward a balanced budget. If Cabinet agrees the budget, then it will form their proposal to Budget and Performance Panel on 18 January 2024 and subject to public consultation 31st January. The feedback from these meetings will be considered by Cabinet and incorporated into a final budget proposal which will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 06 February 2024 and recommended to Council on 28 February 2024.

The current budget proposal produces a balanced budget through utilisation of the

Councils reserves. Cabinet and Officers must continue to work ahead of Cabinet's 06 February 2024 meeting to identify further opportunities for savings, efficiencies, and income generation to further reduce the use of reserves.

Whilst the longer-term financial forecasts contain numerous estimates and assumptions, which will change over time, the forecasts clearly highlight potential annual and cumulative budget deficits over the next 5 years and the position the Council faces. Although this position is not unique to this Council, and is reflected nationally across many public sector bodies, the gaps identified for 2025/26 and beyond are of a level that both Members and Officers need to recognise the size of the challenge ahead and manage the transitional change to the way that the Council delivers both its statutory and non-statutory services across the district .

Councillor Hamilton-Cox proposed, seconded by Councillor Wood:-

"That the recommendations, as set out in the report, be approved."

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet make recommendations to Council regarding the Lancaster City Council element of the Council Tax as set out in paragraph 3.3 (option one) of the report which is a 2.99% increase to the Band D Council Tax (from £249.18 to £256.63).
- (2) That Cabinet makes recommendations regarding its initial budget proposals as set out in section 5 and Appendix A of the report.
- (3) That the recommendations and proposals in the report be referred to Council on 24 January for initial consideration as well as being presented for scrutiny by Budget and Performance Panel on 18 January, in order that any feedback can be provided to Cabinet at its 06 February meeting.

Officer responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Finance Officer

Reasons for making the decision:

The budget framework in general sets out a financial plan for achieving the Council's corporate priorities and outcomes which incorporate the above cross cutting themes. Equalities impact assessments are undertaken for the relevant activities which are reflected in the budget.

The decision enables the proposals to be considered by the Budget and Performance Panel and at January Council allowing Cabinet to make further recommendations back to Council to complete the budget setting process for 2024/25.

58 REPORTING IN OF URGENT DECISIONS - DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS

In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Part 2, Section 7 –

Delegations to the Chief Executive Matters of Urgency) the Chief Executive submitted a report to Cabinet with details of two urgent decisions taken under Rule 15 following consultation with the relevant portfolio holder and with the agreement of the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny. The Urgent Decisions both related to the procurement of demolition services in relation to the major incident on 3 December 2024. (UB 135 & UB136 refer).

Resolved unanimously:

That the Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive on 6th December and 15th December 2023 following the declaration of a major incident on 3rd December 2023 be noted.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 6.38 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Liz Bateson, Democratic Support - email ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk**

MINUTES PUBLISHED ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024.